FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER

"For a world united in prayer"

Volume XXIII, Number 6, December 1972

FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER

Founded by Carl Allison Evans (1880-1956)

Our purpose: To promote the practice of prayer among all religious faiths whose fundamental belief is in God, regardless of race, creed or color, and whose tenets include the universal attributes of truth, honesty, justice, and mercy, that thereby there may arise a closer relation to Almighty God and a deeper spirit of fellowship among mankind.

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EDITORIAL

HUMAN FEELINGS AT THIS TIME OF YEAR

The brief dark days of December bring memories older, seemingly, than we are. Our homes or apartments loom around us like caves. We light the fire or the candles or the tree and treasure their light as if we were our own ancestors remembering the time when there was no light at all except when God created it by causing the sun to rise or the lightning to flash. . . . We go back to the elementals of existence—to the profound comforts of home and kinship and plenty, to the vast mysteries surrounding us, and to those shared explanations of our being and our destiny which we call religion. We and our feelings are seldom as downright human as they are at this season.

It is the human and his feelings and his needs and his howls or whispers as he tries to get in touch with God that most interest me. If I sometimes speak too personally, I do so in hopes that the details of my humanity will be recognizable to others who are human and that, on the basis of this recognition, I and others will be able to communicate. I want to communicate with others chiefly so that they can tell me what their answers are (and they do tell me, spelling out their knowledge for me in the most considerate and sympathetic way), but also partly for the sake of communication itself, for feeling that I am not alone in suffering all my excruciating questions and for feeling, in turn, that I have helped another to feel that he or she is not alone, either. This sort of communication means more to me than the beauties of King James's translation of the Bible or Luther's great and stirring hymn, to name only two of the works of art that our Christian religion has been so profuse in producing. I prefer person-to-person communication because, then, I am able to interrupt and pester you with more questions until I know for sure what you mean by your answers.

I find it interesting that the generation after mine, the generation of my children, has displayed en masse a like preference for the human as against the formal and established and handed-down. I find it more than interesting—I feel almost vindicated. I envy them doing happily and together what I had to do with what seemed like dangerous audacity by myself. They are able to be more human about being human.

One of my feelings at this time of year is pleasure in seeing all these youngsters with whom I can communicate so much better than with my own generation, that crowd that dressed so well and seemed to me so stuck up because they knew all the answers without even trying. . . .

My isolation in my own generation must have been as much my fault as the others', however, and, having found some answers on my own, I do not despise them or feel outcast by them. I wish them all a Merry Christmas annually. But I am unable now to join them in their patronage of the established places of worship just as I am incapable of joining hands with the youngsters and singing with them in the street. I am obliged to put up with my position halfway between the two groups, neither conformist nor non-conformist. And, to be frank, I like it that way. It is my way. I never enjoy it so much as at this time of year when we all want to congregate somehow in the warmth and lights out of the dark and the bitter cold. —P.G.

BEAUTIFUL as are the temples and cathedrals built in the name of God, still the greatest temple which can be erected is that of the soul which is transformed by the consciousness of the indwelling Spirit of God empowering and vitalizing all life. It lifts one into the very presence of the Divine to contemplate the tremendous forces which could be exerted through the combination of those who believe in God. —*Carl A. Evans*

PEACE ON EARTH

Pearl L. Kirk

"Unto you is born this day a Saviour which is Christ the Lord."

A Saviour, Who can save us from the despair and difficulty that are all around us. But He is so easy to miss in the crowd. The innkeeper missed Him. Herod missed Him.

He went unrecognized those many years ago. So will He go unrecognized today by those who are absorbed in things and material goods and look to them for strength and support.

God's answer to the world was a child, as the angels sang PEACE ON EARTH.

Peace on Earth! The world today is filled with war, hatred, racial problems, drugs, and the noise of many battles and more conflicts to come.

The world is no darker now than then, not as dark. Darker days were to follow that angelic song. The Babe Who lay in the manger was to be hated, abused, rejected, and crucified. Hours of darkness were to cover the land. In following years thousands who followed Him would be persecuted and put to death. Yet the angelic song was true. 'PEACE ON EARTH TO MEN OF GOOD WILL.'

We have peace in our hearts because the birth of Jesus is the secret of PEACE ON EARTH.

It is Christmas, and Christians everywhere rejoice at the words of the angel: "FOR UNTO YOU IS BORN THIS DAY IN THE CITY OF DAVID A SAVIOUR, WHICH IS CHRIST THE LORD."

He took our common life and daily toil and turned them into divine things.

CHRISTMAS IN MY HEART

Josephine H. Voracek

The little Angel smiles down at me from her perch atop the Christmas tree. In the flickering candlelight, her tarnished dress looks almost white.

Gingerbread men with raisin eyes beneath the branches try and hide. Popcorn balls and peppermint canes, ti c-tac-toe and other games.

A spinning top that hums and sings. Molasses cookies—colored paper rings. A homemade sled shutter-green that gleams — red crepe-paper socks filled with jelly beans..

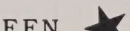
A little rag doll with yarn for hair, button-shoe eyes and a pink dress with a flare. A tin winding music box playing a hymn —-oranges and apples fastened with string.

A story book and some jacks and a ball. Black walnuts gathered in the Fall. Mother and Father beaming with pride as behind smiles and laughter worry hides.

As alone in my silent room I sit, it's so nice remembering all of this. And as the Church Bells chime in steeples high—I watch as another Christmas passes by.

In my hands clasped tightly is an only gift—and to the heavens misty eyes I lift. "O, Thank You, God, for this Memory Book at which in leisure hours I can look!"

THIS EVERGREEN



Everard Thomson

Lord, I have lesser need to pray
For piety on Christmas Day;
But make my faith in months between
Abiding as this evergreen.

AND LO! A SONG TO REMEMBER

Josephine H. Voracek

The precious Christmas Story lives on through all the years. It is a story that's so beautiful it leaves no room for tears. The legend tells of Jesus Christ who was born on earth, and whose bed was just a manger on that cold night of his birth.

The wintry wind was bitter cold, the sky lay low and gray, when Mary and Joseph arrived in Bethlehem that day. The inns were all crowded, there was no room for them to stay. And tired, hungry and weary, the two travelers were turned away.

Inside a stable they found refuge at last. And it was within this humble dwelling that the World's Salvation was cast. The animals all lay quietly as they watched the Savior's birth. They gazed in solemn awe at the small Jesus who had come from Heaven to Earth.

Upon a bed of straw his Mother laid him as she gently stroked his head, then tucked the straw around him as he lay upon the lowly bed. "My little son, my little son, you'll need strong roots to grip this earth and grow. I pray the joy and peace you've brought me, one day all the world will know."

As Mary and Joseph knelt beside the manger upon which Jesus rested, their hands clasped in prayer, cheeks pressed against the straw, a Great Love was manifested.

Tired and exhausted from the long journey, soon Mary and Joseph slept, but with wondrously wide eyes their little son Jesus the lonely vigil kept.

From the depths of the black heavens came the crystal white of snow. The snowflakes gently falling transformed all things below. A giant star streaked across the sky and above the stable stood—still and white—its beams spread out—and covered the world with its powerful light.

The fire began to dwindle and soon lost its mellow glow.

The coldness of the winter night began to slowly grow. The animals all crept nearer, and with their breath they warmed the small Prince of Peace who would one day wear a Crown of Thorns.

A small black bird huddled on a rafter high looked down upon the scene with enraptured eye. He poised for flight, then down he flew, and spiraled and fanned the residue into a ruddy hue.

As the flames leaped up and the sparks dispersed, the feathers on the bird's breast caught fire and burned, leaving it bare. The repugnant aroma filled the air, and the seared flesh, like a looking-glass, reflected the fire's red glare.

Then Jesus raised his tiny hand and blessed the small courageous bird. "Thou shall be called Robin Redbreast. In thy heart shall be Joy, Gladness, and Mirth. Thou shall spread Happiness wherever you go as you travel far and wide on the earth. Thou shall bring Cheer to dispel gloom and sadness. Thou shall invoke thoughts of me with thy Beauty and Song. Now go forth and sing, little bird, sing through all the Four Seasons—for this Christmas Night your Song shall prolong."

No longer being able to flap its tired singed wings, onto the snow the bird floundered to relieve the sting. And as the Infant Jesus in silence watched, the blest bird began to sing: "WAKE UP! WAKE UP! COME ONE, COME ALL! REJOICE AND WORSHIP THE NEWBORN KING! LOOK UP! LOOK UP AND SEE THE STAR, ITS LIGHT SHINES TO WHEREVER YOU ARE!"

This miracle really happened long ago on that first Christmas Night. And this narrative explains why a Robin is the grandest of all sights. When it snows in Wintertime or in the early Spring, his red breast shines against the white, and I'm reminded of that Christmas Night when Robin Redbreast was decreed a name and a voice to sing.

Christmastime is a time for dreaming and reliving the past of long ago—the happy holidays of childhood which make memories all aglow. This story that I've told you my Mother told to me, when I was just a little tot and sat upon her knee.

A GREATER REALIZATION OF CHRISTMAS

Helen Gee Woods

In the walks of life many people emerge from a crisis only to meet another in a different way, each perhaps resulting in a more meaningful reassurance to move on and upwards.

During a serious illness, I was taken to a hospital in a city where none of my relatives resided. I experienced Christmas of that year as a day of extreme suffering...more spiritually than physically.

I received gifts from relatives in other states, from Scotland, where my only brother was president of a mission. Gifts came from local friends. And beautiful Christmas cards from poet friends in many states. All these I tossed aside because I had no inward peace or appreciation of enjoyment that would have let me feel the rich significance of Christmas Day. (My heart was broken.)

From among ten nurses on the floor, two showed understanding and were sympathetic. One of the two brought a package into my room and, trying to cheer me, said, "Would you like a new dress?" The package just happened to contain a dress for me from my son and family. But I could hardly raise pleasure to hang it on a rack.

After unwrapping other small gifts, such as cosmetics and handkerchiefs, I immediately wanted to dispense with these, feeling as though I might never have need for them. I gave some to each of the two nurses, the ones who were compassionate, and to the willing girls in the laundry room who always returned my clothing neatly pressed on hangers.

The girls did not understand why I wished to give away my gifts, and I did not know why at this time myself, realizing as I did that they had come from cherished friends.

The two nurses of whom I have spoken learned that I was a poet and tried to temper and quiet me to writing. But no! For the present this gift from God could not console me—I, the one who

loved it so much mainly for bridging a wide gap in my life, as the following poem expresses:

THE RECEIVER

O blessed gift of poetry
I bring to you my heart,
Its worn and tired aching,
With cares in you depart.
You take my spirit in your flight,
And give expression wings,
With song that lifts the shadow-night,
Where voices sing with Kings.

Why was it, I asked myself, that I, who loved prayer and to pray, could not reconcile myself this day of all days—Christmas.

The following year of 1970, I was home, yet not strong. I was praying that this Christmas would be blessed and filled for me with enjoyment—that the dear friends who had remembered me last year would not forget me this year. I longed for cards to come again from my dear poet friends.

Prayer, poetry, and the poets would help to build my life anew, more meaningful, with a greater realization that our Lord heals and blesses: being born anew into the light of spiritual healing.

Yes, the beautiful Christmas cards and gifts came again, this time addressed to my home. My brother had returned from Scotland and visited me. My son and his wife brought me a granddaughter, one I had hoped to have for five years. My neighbors brought me strength and a sense of security that I was not alone, with their love and Christmas delicacies.

A tiny sparkling tree in my front window brought me the joyous memory of trimming a huge tree for my small sons. Yes! Christmas has come twice since that irrevocable day of 1969, when the cross-currents of confusion, disillusion, and illness made of me a person not myself, yet very conscious of the difference in true and false friends.

JOY TO YOUR WORLD!

Pollyanna Sedziol

August. Sandwiched in-between the freezing of garden produce, attending to general household duties and to my children's wants and needs, and my poems, I am also typing and cutting the bits of personal poetry which will be our Christmas card this year.

We will send them to an ever-lengthening list of current and past friends, relatives, and business associates, some of whom we know will not be doing likewise. Some have ceased this tradition as a protest against commercialization of the Holy Day, some in order to channel that expense into worthy causes, some because we no longer appear on their updated lists.

We will receive a wide variety of cards; most of them will be clever, colorful, Christmassy cute. A few will be beautiful and inspiring. A few will be the increasingly popular personal form-letter capsulating for us the past year of the sender's life.

Ours will be different, being homemade to reflect and witness to our understanding and joy in the unique event which is remembered through the celebration of Christmas.

The increasing expense of getting ready and mailing cards caused us, as it causes many others each year, to consider seriously whether or not we should continue the practice or at least limit it considerably. Our decision was and is that, rightly oriented, we can witness to the faith which sustains our lives. Acting on this decision, we had a rubber stamp made which summarized this faith as succinctly and simply as possible:

Christmas...
God's Love
His Gift
our life
Rejoice!
John 20:31

Every year now our cards bear this message. Our cards

vary. One year we sent a carefully constructed photo-montage of each member of our family, pets included, as ornaments on the outline of a Christmas tree. The rubber-stamp message was on the reverse side with our greetings. Another year our card was a small booklet of my poems, each personally typed and taking many hours during which my thoughts prayed for those who would be receiving them. Yet another year we returned to the family photo greeting, this time using the "Christ the King" candle as our centerpiece.

This year we are using two poems—two cards, one for our theologically oriented friends and kinsmen, the other, simpler, for those less so. With an eye toward ecological economy, these will go as postcards, eliminating an envelope to discard (and revealing the message to others *'en passant.'*)

Somewhere I read that those whom God has given any talent of creativity are bound by His stewardship requirements to use it wherever possible. This we try to do in this year of Our Lord 1972 through these verses:

In
this
lovely
month of
rejoicing,
may the Light of God
be renewed in your
experiences each
day, that this
Infant Jesus
may mature
in your life
being light
love hope
joy and..
"I Am"

What thou art in the sight of God, that thou truly are.

COMMUNION AT CHRISTMAS

Emily Sargent Councilman

In a circle where Love takes us all in, we stood around His star-lit manger-bed and spoke His name, "Jesus," remembering the angel's command to Joseph: "You shall give Him the name of Jesus (Savior) for He will save His people from their sins."

"From pride," I said, new-hearing the Word. "When I listen, He saves me from the sin of pride, my spiritual pride, too often disguised, unrecognized, ignored."

Another said, "From unforgiveness. When I remember to forget my wounds from other hands, He saves me."

Still another: "Why, I've been condemning my brothers. He saves me from *my* sin of intolerance of *their* intolerance."

Then my friend with sightless eyes spoke softly, wonderingly, "When I put my hand in His and walk with confidence, I do not stumble in futility, alienation, despair. He saves me, most of all, from darkness."

AT NEW YEAR'S . . .

Agnes Choate Wonson

I question: "Are my lessons done?
My Best . . . given to each one?
Likely there may fall a tear. . .
I have spoiled that leaf, I fear!"

Contrite, I approach the Throne
Shamed that such a Page I own;
"Now the old Year is no more,
I'll try harder than before. . .

Try to keep the New Year white,
Pure, unspotted. . . in Thy sight!"

THEY PRAY

Ray Allen Albert

Serene
The silent stars move in their world
Of calm and quiet and pray
That on the earth
Is peace.

A TALK WITH GOD

Maxine Perkins

God, I want to thank you
  for all you have done.
You gave me six children,
  helped me raise them one by one.

Now they are grown,
  out on their own.
But I can always talk to you—
  I know I'm not alone.

We raised two good women,
  four good men.
Once again, God,
  I thank you again.

Now I am growing weary,
  getting old. So, God,
Instead of giving, would you take
  my body and soul.

Lay me down to rest,
  because you know
I have done my best.

CHRISTMAS CHIMES

Eleanor Ebersole

Suddenly the great chimes rang. One who had once dreamed of playing them now sounded melodies of a long-forgotten people. Out across the city, farther than one could see or imagine, the music flew, drew in the clouds, and floated beyond them through the sky.

A child had dreamed that the silent chimes of a childhood, about which there existed many legends, would one day under his hands recover the heart of the lost people.

Now he played. And there came sounds ancient as the ancient past of all that heard. And yet new, new as the day they rang.

Silence responded. Motion ceased. A wonder settled on the people as they turned and lifted their faces. Who had climbed those ancient stairs? And who could play such a melody? No one knew. The dead returned? Perhaps. Some gift newly born? Who could tell?

The melody, followed by other melodies, wrought in the people a mysterious change. No one could work without its rhythm. A new rhythm. No one could sing without its tones. Remembered tones. New tones. Each sang to the melody words of a forgotten self. Each, and all, but the one who played. The carillonneur with childhood dreams listened not to where the melody went but, always, to whence the melody came.

The bell tower chimes continued to play, and the wonder of its melodies brought a newness to the hearts of the land.

To love a man means to see him as God intended him to be.

SON OF GOD *Emma S. McLaughlin*

Sleep, my Child, I wrap your body snugly,
So protect you from the chill of night —
At my breast may heaven's peace attend you;
Angels hover just beyond our sight.

I, your mother, know that you are special,
You are love made flesh so all may see
God Incarnate, He who rules forever;
You were born to set your people free.

Oh my Son, let these arms be your comfort;
For this moment you belong to me.
Soon the world will know and men will claim you
Son of God, for all eternity.

IN THE PRESENCE OF HIS LOVE *Emma S. McLaughlin*

Slipping into my place in the dimness of the sanctuary, I was immediately aware that the effort I had made to attend *was* worthwhile. Looking back over the preceding week, I wondered how I managed to accomplish everything; there had been so many events and duties vying for my attention. Now it was finally Christmas Eve, that mysterious, magical time when the whole world seems to pause in anticipation and reverence.

The last gifts were wrapped, needing only to be placed under the tree before the hour of bedtime. The tree waited, holding out branches glittering with silver and gold. Final preparations for Christmas dinner were completed, the turkey stuffed and partially roasted that very evening, to allow me more time with the family in the morning. The dining room table bore the usual weight of cookies, fruitcake, nuts, and candy, in expectation of friendly

visitors. I was tired — bone tired. I had almost decided to remain at home, listening to quiet carols and enjoying the glow and glimmer of a house ready for Christmas. After all, I had worked hard enough to make it so.

Now I was glad I had come. How still it was, fragrant with pine boughs, the center aisle flanked on either side by tall, slim tapers. How very, very still — and peaceful. I was content to sit limply, feeling weariness drain from my body, watching shadows grow and weave in candlelight.

From distant recesses of the choir loft came the first whispered notes of *Cantique de Noel*, and the soloist moved effortlessly into the organ melody, merged with it. The sweet voice threaded between high, white columns, trembled among the arches, and was swallowed by darkness.

In the pew ahead of me I noticed parents with a small child —a child who had been granted the special privilege of attending the midnight service, staying up long past the usual hour of bedtime. I was at once entranced by the child's face, trapped by the wonder-light in his eyes, a steady, radiant glow. As I watched, the small head began to nod and droop. Even in unconsciousness he sought a shoulder on which to rest, a place to lay his head. The young mother drew the child into the curve of her arm and the parents exchanged fond glances above the quiet form. In that instant I was caught up into the magic circle of their love.

"O thrill of hope, the weary
world rejoices. . . . "

Hope — in the promise of a child. Faith — in the hearts of parents with courage to accept the promise *and* the challenge. I turned my attention back to the beauty of the service and the joyous singing of carols.

Later, driving home through a winter-white world, I marveled at my complete restoration. I no longer felt tired, but was strangely rested and at peace. How was this so? I saw no Christmas star, other than what was mirrored in the eyes of a little child. I heard no angel chorus. Yet I could almost believe I had knelt at the manger of Bethlehem, in the very presence of His love. . . .

MORNING PRAYER

Doris Wight

Let the sky be blue;
Let the rain be clean;
Give me my daily bread;
Let not my soul be mean.

SILENCE — A FITTING PLACE

Mildred Long

The artist paints the picture of the Innkeeper coming to a side door to see who was knocking. Looking out, he saw Joseph and Mary on the donkey. To Joseph's question about lodging, he replied gruffly, "No room here. Be gone!" A beggar raised himself from the corner where he was crouching and said, "Sir, there are stables in the hills back of the Inn. Perhaps you can find shelter there."

So Joseph and Mary turned away and went to one of the stalls in the hillside. Here it was warm and sheltered from the night air. Here were peace and silence and the sweet breath of the cattle—a fitting environment for the birth of the Christ Child.

The Inn was no place to furnish a cradle for the Prince of Peace. The people gathered there were full of their own plans and problems. Quarreling and noisy and preoccupied, what interest had they in weary travelers?

All His life Jesus sought the simple paths, the uncrowded ways. All His teachings direct our thinking to that which is within

the heart, to the silent place where man meets God and God finds a resting-place in man.

The heart that is crowded with fear, turmoil, confusion, antagonism, and self-centeredness is slow to invite Him in. Nor can He be at home there till He has brought peace instead of strife; till that heart allows Him to establish some quiet places for their communion.

At Christmas time, we need to return to some simplicity in order to commemorate His birth rightly. What He desires is humility, sweetness of soul, quietness like that of the stable and the stars, adoration like that of the shepherds. We could do away with tinsel and noise, with forms and ceremonies, and offer Him a more acceptable gift — an adoring and trusting heart.

Then when He seeks entrance we shall have a quiet place of worship within us and we shall invite Him in and have fellowship together. For Jesus said, "I stand at the door and knock.... If any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to Him and sup with him and he with me."

HEART CONTENT

Mildred Long

I saw it open — this night-blooming cereus —
Waiting for sunlight and crowds to depart;
Lured by the darkness — petal by petal,
Unfolding, revealing its luminous heart.

Who can fathom the hidden mystery —
A heart so confident and secure?
Shunning all glory, risking oblivion,
Content to be lonely, forgotten, pure.

ANNOUNCEMENT TO THE SHEPHERDS

(Translated from Rilke)

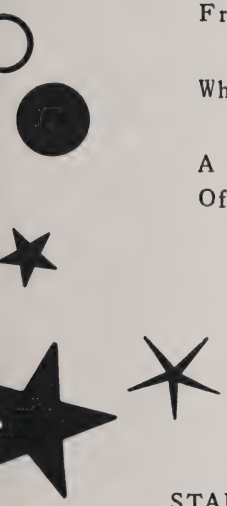
Kelly Janes

Look up, you men there at the fire, men
Aware how wide is the extent of heaven,
Astrologers even. Observe me, for I am
A nova rising, all of my substance burning
And shining, my light so strong, so fearfully
strong
That the heaven of heavens cannot contain
All of me. Do let my radiance shine
Into your existence. What blind eyes,
Dark understandings, hopeless destinies
I find here! Shepherds, far and wide
My wings extend within your emptiness.
Do not be frightened at the breadfruit
tree's
Casting a shadow, the shadow of my
brightness.
Still, if you could only fear, if you
could know
How now upon your upturned, vacant foreheads
The future shines! In this blinding light
Much will yet happen. To you I confide it,

You being here obscure, to you true believers
Narrate the whole
By lightning and rain, by the files of passing
birds,
By the varying wind, or by whatever will
Not overwhelm you, fill you with conceit.
You will hardly hold these things inside
Of yourselves for torment. They will surely
stream

Through you like your food to keep earth
green,
Much as the ecstasy an angel feels
Flows out in grace. And, if a burning bush
Dazzled your eyes, with Eternity shouting
To you from it, or cherubim for a while
Walked here beside you, calling as you call
sheep,
Devoid of awe you would fall upon your faces,
Name this earth and name earth's many races.

But that is over. New things I proclaim
From which earth's circle shall round ever
wider.
What is a burning bush to us? God reaches
in to
A maiden's womb. I am the outward shining
Of her inward grace, I lead you to its
meaning.



STAR OF CHRISTMAS

Ruth K. Hall

There we re no celebrations, no sleigh bells or snow;
A vast, silent darkness spread over the land.
Three Kings made a journey, predestined to go
To witness the birth of One born to command!
The miracle happened, with few who would know
Or hear the triumphant, celestial band;
But a Star, brightly shining, turned darkness to light,
and Hallowed forever that first Christmas night.

AFFIRMATION

Elizabeth Searle Lamb

In Christ is my health,
In Him also my wealth.
I affirm Him my guide
As I walk by His side.
His love now enfolds me,
His wisdom controls me.
My life has rich meaning
Beyond all my dreaming.

CHRISTMAS ELOQUENCE

Jaye Giammarino

There is great eloquence
in the humility we feel
at Christmas time, when love
rushes forth from the hearts
of men.
There is calm joy
in the good things we do—
like candles in a window,
words offer hope
and handclasps are warm.
There is grace
in the simplicity of true
compassion the great soul
feels for another's pain.
There is love
in the rebirth of Christ
that captures the truant soul
and sends it back to Him,
like the bird coming home.

PANACEA FOR PEACE

Aarno Davidson

Recently our small art-minded community proved that the old adage "art for art's sake" is losing its magic in this age of missiles and man-to-moon extravaganzas. A former restaurant accustomed to satisfying people's physical appetites was converted into a first-rate art gallery to quench man's spiritual thirst.

This artistic event transformed overnight an otherwise dormant business sector into a human beehive. For two weeks, day and night, art-lovers pilgrimaged to this much-publicized "temple of art." They came not only to view a vast array of oils, pastels, sculptures, etc., but also to purchase some of these terrestrial treasures.

An innovation of this exhibition was that the participants agreed in advance to donate fifteen per cent of the gross sales to the local Y.M.C.A. This project was more than just another art exhibit, particularly so for those who, like the writer, believe that the arts and crafts could be a most effective antidote against individual, national, and international animosities.

While I was feasting my eyes upon human ingenuity, my imagination got the best of me. I fancied finding myself in a capacity-filled courtroom. His honor, the judge, was relaxing on a throne-like chair while one "silent witness" after another mounted the witness stand and testified that, all human frailties notwithstanding, man's tireless quest for self-expression remains his most innate, most valued truth.

Scrutinizing these colorful creations with the eyes of a layman, I could easily distinguish the master from the amateur, the traditional from the avant-garde, the profound from the superficial. It was not so much the work of the individual artist but the exhibit as a whole which aroused the viewers' admiration—the striking differences, for instance, of subject matter, technique, color schemes, perspective.

Here was a psychedelic blending of colors that made my

mind whirl in a daze and yet, after three hours of browsing around, I left the hall perfectly relaxed in body and mind. It was the same exalted sensation one feels after a symphony, opera, or ballet.

Goethe once said, "Show me your artists and your poets, and I will tell you from what country you hail." This somewhat nationalistic viewpoint could hardly have been applied to this art exhibition. For here the artists represented not merely people from every walk of life but many a creed and nationality. Here was a display of universality and versatility that was typically American—America the invincible "melting pot" that never melts.

After visiting such exhibitions, one cannot help but conclude that the interchange of creative arts and crafts on a global scale could enhance the cause of world peace.

Oddly enough, there are many people, both the intellectual and the uninformed, who minimize and even deride such international cordiality. It is safe to assert, however, that the vast majority of the world look upon these friendly gestures as practical means of bringing nations together. In the last analysis, there is hardly a more effective cold-war defroster than the warm sweat and tears that usually enter into the creation of the seven leading arts. Most people understand the Esperanto of one art or another. When they do, the Babel towers of confusion, prejudice, and intolerance begin to crumble and totter and fall.

RETROSPECT

Monica Boyce

If what I seek
    is nothing beyond
        a pot of gold

my life can seem
    as finished as
        a tale that is told.

THE CHRISTMAS MIRACLE

Zelma S. Dennis

The miracle of Christmas is the gift of Love,
That shines like radiant star-rays from the heavens above.
It comes and blesses every need of the human heart,
And here the Christ-like spirit inspires every part.
The miracle of Christ-love now I give to you,
To illuminate your Christmas and all the whole year through.

HOW TO BLESS GOD

Phyllis Malone

"God bless you," I said, as the carry-out boy finished placing my groceries in the car trunk and slammed the door with an enthusiastic bang. "Wow, ma'm! He's already blessed me," he said. "Look at me!" He spread his arms like a scarecrow. "Last night some guy ran into my car and almost totalled it. I didn't get a scratch. God had to be watching over me!"

"God bless you." Three short words that pack a wallop. The inflection of your voice adds depth to them. God blesses us even in our unawareness. But do we stop and bless Him right back? Psalms 96:2 says, "Bless His Name. Each day tell someone that He saves."

I use the same gas station for the weekly needs of my car. On this particular morning there was an attendant who was unknown to me. As he placed the hose in the gas tank, I offered him a new tract called *The Missing Day, As Discovered By The Astronauts*. I began a synopsis of the article, which included

the story of Joshua and the day he asked the Lord to cause the sun to stand still. "Joshua," this young black man said, "that's my name, too!" His smile was as wide as the Mississippi. When the sale was complete, I said, "God bless you now, Joshua." "Lady," he answered, "as long as I have been in this town no one has ever said that to me." Psalms 103:2 tells us, "Yes, I will bless the Lord, and not forget the glorious things he does for me."

We meet people every day, and it takes so little effort to ask our Heavenly Father to reach out and touch them. You may never know any names, but as some of the same people perform services for you, offer them an expression of His Abiding Love. There are a few so engrossed in their troubles that you will receive a weak smile or a raised eyebrow for your offer of friendship. These are the folks to whom we need to give the most understanding. This is a time to sail into a prayer of compassion for the individual. Lord, you know that problem. Untangle the heartaches, anger, or unforgiveness, and fill them with your Holy Spirit. Those who receive your verbalizations of love make all the rejections of it worthwhile. Psalms 104:1: "I bless the Lord: O, Lord, my God, how great you are!"

There's Cathy, the friendly young check-out girl at the grocery store. I have always said, "God bless you now," when she handed me my change. One day she said, "I look forward to your weekly visit because it's so nice to have someone give me God's blessing." Psalms 134:2 gives us a command: "Lift your hands in holiness and bless the Lord."

As you become acquainted with more people, you will discover whether or not they have a church home, and the possibility of inviting them to yours. They may give you a prayer request for themselves or a loved one. The blessings of God are like a ring—the more that is offered, the larger the circle and the more people that are included in the center. Those you meet are hungry to know that someone with a smile really does care. You are able to be the living proof. Make it a daily priority. You will discover that as you zero in on someone with God's blessing, you in turn bless God. Nothing is held together without our Father.

WE SENIOR CITIZENS

Minnie M. Bauer

What is old age? It is many things, depending on your point of view. It is a time of remembering; it is a time to sit and dream; perhaps a time of regret; a time of rest; a time of infirmities—the shaky hand, the faltering step, the dimming eyesight, the deaf ear, the whitened hair, a loss of memory.

But truly it is the best time of our lives, because it is the last long mile of life's highway. Where does it go? To the goal that every human soul is created for: to meet their Creator, the Master Divine. May we well prepare for that momentous time when we reach this all-important ending of the road.

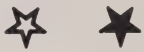
While doing so, we need not be sad, nor weary, nor disheartened. We can live as usual. If we recall and remember the past long years, dwell on the many joys, pleasant times, all the manifold blessings that were ours. Our beloved own, our tried and true friends who helped us along every step of the way. When we think of the present and the future in our modern age, it holds countless blessings for the elderly. Should there be some regret, pass it over and forget it. It cannot be amended now, it is past and gone.

Although the hand be shaky, it still can do many things for ourselves and, within limitations, for others. Perhaps the step falters, we can still seek the outer world for beauty and joy, such as a walk through a garden or a short visit with a neighbor. Should the eyes see less, perhaps they can still read—to keep up with modern trends, to observe all the wonders around us that God made for us. Although the hearing is impaired, it may just shut out the harshness of the world, the unwanted word, the unpleasant voice. Sometimes an inner sight or hearing has greater depths than an outer one. And what of the whitened hair? It is a mark of respect, dignity; a badge of honor for weathering all of life's years and coming up with a smile.

A great advantage of this time of rest is the opportunity it

provides to pray much. To see the real value of spiritual living. To pray unhampered by daily cares; to fathom the greatness of God's love and mercy toward us.

Some senior citizens are blessed with quite good ability, some are very infirm. Whichever way it is, let us look up and live and be glad for other days and still another day. When we go through the portals of Eternity, let us hope that we hear our Heavenly Father say: "I gave you long life, many days, and it was all very well done, my child, very well done."



LIFT UP THINE EYES *Catherine Cabeen Houck*

I look with hope tonight to my own hills
And think I see the shepherds herding flocks
And wonder if they came to my doorsills
If I would open wide or draw the locks.

The green boughs beckon me to stars aglow,
To light that turns the night to silent peace;
And makes stars seem to dance upon the snow
And fills the air with calm and sweet release.

The darkness of the valley disappears
As if a hand had drawn aside a screen
And wiped away all hatred, wars and fears.
One star grows lustrous in its silver sheen.

And as I watch the Heavens on this night
I see God recreate the gift of light.

FARMWIFE'S THOUGHTS

Estelle D. Broadrick

The path to the patch of trees beyond the pond is the path to peace and beauty. To contentment, to honest appraisal, and to a broader scope of thought.

The silence and the solitude are in themselves a sermon on the goodness, the greatness, and the generosity of Our Lord.

In quietude one may see life with greater truth. A walk under tall old trees may ease the tension of daily living and inspire us to higher thoughts and kinder deeds.

The world is infinitely immense. We and our concerns are infinitely small. Our troubles may loom large, but problems and perplexities grow smaller and look petty when we open our minds to the realization of how great is our God.

When we look upon the handiwork of the Lord, life seems less a sham, less a mockery. When we survey the daily miracles and become aware of the incomprehensible power and splendor of His creations and of how He works in the minds and hearts and lives of people, we are humbled, as we should be. We are filled with a greater understanding of His glory.

That such a God could create earth, planets, divide the lands, make night and day and all of the small and wondrous plants and birds and insects, and create you and me...our fathers and mothers, our forefathers, is enough to bring us to our knees.

Somehow we are made to feel and hear and see His wonders as we walk under trees, along a river, beside the sea.

Beauty of nature enters the eye and sets the heart aglow, flooding the mind with understanding, with wholesome light, and gives wings to our doubts and fears and all the little things that have annoyed us and caused us concern.

Walk in a forest or in a park, in patches of sun and shade, observe the wonders He has created, let the creations fill you with strength and inspiration. The willows bend over the pond. The boughs dip and sway and are reflected in the waters. Silver-

sided minnows flash near the surface. Butterflies do a ballet above the tiny, woodland flowers. A mockingbird sings in rapture from a distant tree.

When I walk in silence and solitude, my cares are discarded like a cloak no longer needed, and I feel like singing in praise of my Creator. My mind is liberated from the prison of petty cares and tasks, and I realize anew that in God I live and move and have my being.

A PRAYER

Marion H. Freeman

Oh Lord deliver us
from our lack of caring
for our brother who
feels not the caress
of Thy love through
one of us

Help us to share warmth
with one another and
with Thee Creator
of all a caring heart
heals wounded souls
and bodies

Lay no burden on
a brother to carry
alone for to be alone
is to be cast out from
the circle of comradeship
so———

take my hand

GOD CREATED

Tom Perkins

Time is,
As I can tell,
Relative,
More to where
The clock is
Than me,
Even though
I think
It ticks for me.

COLLECTORS' ITEMS

Arthur W. Muller

Traditions are the pulse of the family. They are the rewarding reminiscences of ancestral togetherness and are captured and revitalized in our daily existence. Nostalgia is obvious all about us with the return of yesterday's fashions, films, songs, and musicals. Even our oldest magazine in the country has returned with its original format. Not to mention the hobbyists who delight in the accumulation of old books, coins, postcards, and various antiques.

Assuming that all these material acquisitions are beneficial to a well-rounded entity, and that philosophers and medical advisors prescribe such diversions for a healthful outlook, they are in themselves not the essence of our lives. They need a companion, and that companion is our spiritual capital or assets.

The collection of spiritual memorabilia is unlimited. In addition to the lessons from the Bible, there are the virtues of

faith, hope, and charity, plus love, forgiveness, and uprighteousness. An inventory of these requisites necessitates the contemplation of each.

FAITH is the foundation of the compiling of the succeeding elements.

HOPE is the haven for our daily harrassments.

CHARITY follows with the caring for our needy brothers.

LOVE predominates with the lightness of a feather and the strength of an oak.

FORGIVENESS must follow the unjust acts perpetrated with or without cause.

UPRIGHTEOUSNESS may be termed the ultimate amassing of the spiritual collation.

With the foregoing items available to all who seek them, it is amazing that they have not been more eagerly prized and desired. No scrapbooks or closets are necessary to hoard them. Nor are any boxes, trunks, or attics essential for their safekeeping. So why not start collecting these spiritual items today and see how much better and fuller your life will be? It's the greatest hobby you could select.

LIFE, LIKE THE BACTRIAN CAMEL

William Walter De Bolt

Life, like the Bactrian camel,
has two humps—
one to carry the burdens of yesterday,
and the other
the hope of tomorrow.

YULETIDE THOUGHTS FROM THE MOON

Marion J. Richardson

No glittering decorations
on the moon —
no sleigh bells, reindeer or snow,
no church bells tolling
to celebrate the Christ child's birth,
no caroling or Christmas trees,
no shopping and rushing for gifts,
but in the hushed silence
of this old planet
amid ancient rocks and dust,
a greater faith in humanity
with renewed hope for the world
and peace is possible.
Christmas is a gift from God
who gave His great love to the world
through His son Jesus Christ,
showing the way to love one another
as He loves us.
If we share this love with people
all over the world,
the star of Christmas
will shine brighter
and murmuring winds will carry
yuletide thoughts over the waters
and all outer space,
bringing the true meaning
of Christmas.

When it gets dark enough, the stars come out.

QUESTION

William Walter De Bolt

Heart, I'm old and weary now,
  Why must you stay young,
Harboring your useless dream—
  All our songs are sung.

Go and close and lock the door,
  Throw the key away. . .
Only memories will walk
  By our side today.

Be no longer gay and sure,
  Eager in your quest,—
It is time, poor restless heart,
  You and I should rest.

OH, GLORIOUS NIGHT!

Reuben L. Musey

Bethlehem—the ancient town in Judea—birthplace of Jesus Christ, son of God, son of Mary, child of a day, monarch of eternity, lies upon a hillside overlooking a beautiful valley.

On that night of nights, the fertile and rich area with succulent grasses found great flocks of hungry sheep grazing while appointed shepherds were watching over the flocks by night. That picturesque scene was evident in the days of David, the second king of Israel and Judah. It is evident still.

The shepherds of a flock were accounted faithful, honest, and religious. Their occupation—to tend, herd, and guard—has ever been a symbol of humility and providential care. The shep-

herd's crook—a crude, bent staff—has been made to take its place in church ritualism as a sign of complacency with the Divine Will, as well also to serve as an emblem of priestly authority.

It is not strange, nor is it without reason, that to these staunch and faithful watchers the first news of the birth of the Christ child should be conveyed. But it was not by foot messenger, not by acclaim of priests, not by cymbals, not by hautboys in the hands of worshippers that these chosen shepherds should be given a sign on that still, quiet night.

On that glorious night—"a silent night, a holy night"—when quietness and stillness was nature's invocation, the heralded word was proclaimed. The stars, heavenly bodies,—fixed points of light in the night sky—blazed a prayer of prayers, their orisons—trembling with astonishment, emotional exaltation of ecstasy.

Night, in all areas, in all languages, is the period from sunset to sunrise, the condition of actual darkness—the symbol for gloom and suffering. But it is often cheerful, bright, and impressive. I do not refer to such nights as come down with no star pouring light from the heavens above. I speak of the nights when you see the pomp and magnificence of heaven turn out "night parade," a night when it seems as though the song which the morning stars began so long ago were chiming yet among constellations, a night when it seems as though the sons of God were shouting for joy. Such a night—with the heavens aglow—the lonely sailor—far from home and his loved ones—blesses from the forecastle, the weary traveler, perhaps belated—having been lost enroute to his destination—sings his song of praise, and the patriotic soldier—guarding his charges—looks thankfully up to heaven.

On that blessed night, oh, glorious night, in that little town of Bethlehem, Gabriel—the angel of the Lord—rode out from the mansions of alabaster, down the steep from the skies. With a rush of glories, the angelic host floated over the heads of the shepherds, startling them as they were keeping their watch. The holy messenger—who had appeared to Mary, the virgin laden with child;

and to Joseph—now came bearing more joyful tidings than ever unfolded.

To the weary but devoted shepherds, the flaming presence of the angel struck them with fear and astonishment. But the angel messenger calmed their perturbations when he spoke the inspiring words that have stood one thousand nine hundred and seventy-one years of time:

"Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings. . . ."

The shepherds lost all fear, and alarm gave place to blessing. They hastened into the town to behold and worship the Christ child, the infant Lord of Lords, King of Kings. After paying their devotions "the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all things they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them" on that night of nights, oh, glorious night!

A MARTHA PRAYS

Helen G. Jefferson

Within me is a Mary-heart
Longing to choose the better part;
But Thou dost give me Martha-work,
Dull daily tasks I must not shirk.

While these hands serve, help me to pray
And live the Brother Lawrence way;
Teach me to fellowship with Thee
Not just at time of prayer-bent knee.

Teach me that toil may be divine
If done for Thee, this home a shrine;
Let it be altar where I bring
Labor and love as offering.

NOTICES AND COMMENT

NEW ADVISOR. Miss Josephine H. Voracek, of St. Louis, Missouri, has generously agreed to become one of our Advisors from the Central Zone. Miss Voracek is a frequent contributor to this publication as well as many others. She says she has been writing for twenty years and has had hundreds of manuscripts published. "I'm a member of the AMORC, AAPA, and the A.I.W.A.," she writes, "and when I'm not writing, I am working. I've been employed since 1954 at International Shoe Company. Am presently working in the General Credit Dept." We are grateful for the talents and the zeal that Miss Voracek brings to the Fellowship.

NEW BOOKS. The Fellowship's library is richer for the addition of two books: "Classics in Chinese Philosophy—from Mo Tzu to

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Mao Tse-Tung," an anthology edited by Wade Baskin (*Philosophical Library, publishers*); and "Public Property," a book of poems by Kelly Janes (*published by the author*).

FIP VISITS BOSTON. At the beginning of October, Executive Secretary Kathryn G. Brown and Executive Director Paul Griffith spent several days in Boston. They were luncheon guests of *Praying Hands* publisher James L. Jenks, Jr., and editor Mrs. Harriett Connor. They had dinner with FIP's President Emeritus William Hung, Trustee Mrs. Samuel Chamberlain and her husband, and Advisor Marion Freeman and Miss Elsa Wilde.

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In prayer it is better to have a heart without words, than words without a heart. —Bunyan

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